

Soon-Ok Lee

"Promoting Religious Freedom in North Korea": Soon-Ok Lee Oral Testimony

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CHAIRMAN YOUNG: Our next witness is Mrs. Soon-Ok Lee, who is a North Korean refugee and author of "Eyes of the Tailless Animals." She's a former North Korean official who witnessed the brutal treatment of Christian believers in North Korean labor camps throughout Korea and Mrs. Lee, we're delighted to have you with us, as well, today. Thank you.

STATEMENT OF SOON-OK LEE [THROUGH INTERPRETER]

MRS. LEE:

My name is Soon-Ok Lee. I defected from North Korea with my son to South Korea searching for freedom. I thank you very much for the opportunity for me to express the real situation existing in North Korea, particularly persecution of Christians. For me, I didn't know God when I lived in North Korea because I was brainwashed to worship Kim Il-Sung and Kim Jong-Il. So I didn't even have the opportunity to seek God or to learn about God. So I was trained to have a bad feeling about Christianity.

In

North Korea from kindergarten up to college students they're brainwashed that the Christianity is like opium, a drug. They also brainwash people that Christians are puppets of invaders. But still the people are indoctrinated over there that religion itself is a worthless thing in that society.

I was forced to go to jail in North Korea. For 14 months I was tortured in the basement for some crime that I had never committed. I was in charge of the depot, the material depot in one of the counties in North Korea. When the economy came sour in the 1980s I was one of them to be blamed.

And until I was in

prison I was very faithful and loyal to Kim Il-Sung and Kim Jong-Il. I was imprisoned in the reform institution and she said the political prisoners camp in Pyongyang Province. In that camp there were 6,000 prisoners. Of them, 2,000 were housewives. Those 2,000 housewives were scapegoats to turn the issue away from the people's complaints for the lack of, the shortage of foods and supplies. These housewives were traveling around looking for food. Then the housewives were questioned, interrogated by the authorities and from that interrogation, when some word pops up that could be interpreted as against the regime, then she's guilty of something; then she was thrown in prison.

And
another reason for imprisoning these people is to have free labor, employing these prisoners in certain projects without having to pay them. Among them, some of the women prisoners were pregnant. So when they were imprisoned, arrested during the pregnancy, then the pregnancy has to be terminated. Even in the third trimester the pregnant woman, still the fetus has to be terminated. I saw many, many occasions similar to that.

Right in front of the mother the fetus was taken to lab for tests for medical purposes. When the mother was crying and pleading to have even dead fetus given to her, then the authority people kicked her and in some occasions take her to the yard and shot her to death.

I also witnessed how they persecuted Christians. The hundreds of people were imprisoned there only--only reason was that they were Christian. And every day there were sessions indoctrinating these Christians, saying if you declare that you're not going to be a Christian anymore we're going to free you. We will save your lives if you say you're going to believe in Kim Il-Sung instead of Christ; we'll free you. But it was amazing that they did not reject God. They didn't accept Kim Il-Sung. I could not understand their faith at the time because I didn't know God.

And they separated
the Christians from other prisoners. We have to call them prisoners. They separated those Christians. The reason they separated the Christians from other groups was to prevent the influence, the Christian influence from the Christians to other detainees.

So
the reason I'm here is to tell you what I heard and what I saw in their eyes. When I left, when I was finally released from the prison, the fellow inmates pled to me that tell whole world what you saw here, such a camp, that it still exists in the world. That's why I'm here to tell you.

In my opinion, the whole world, internationally, the whole world does not know the reality of North Korea. In North Korea the Christian is defined as political criminal. They indoctrinate you not to look at God, not to look at heaven, just to look at the reality there.

When the Christian was persecuted or Christian died, they don't give a decent funeral. They just roll up in a blanket and just throw away.

During this short time it is impossible to tell you all the realities existing in North Korea. Therefore, I offer the book, a copy of which is on the table. That's it. Their hope and wish is to claim God openly while they live on earth. I hope you help these Christians--they're the martyrs--to achieve their goal. Thank you again for this opportunity.

CHAIRMAN YOUNG:

Mrs. Lee, thank you very much for very compelling testimony. We'll be delighted to take your book and have the opportunity of reading it. Thank you very much.